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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Puente Project, a program developed to provide support services to Latino students attending California community colleges. A discussion of the organizational response to students of color and of organizational socialization practices is followed by a description of the development of the Puente Project. The project's success is described with examples. An analysis of the program based on semi-structured interviews with administrators, faculty, and Puente Project staff at two community colleges, telephone interviews with Puente Project staff at the state level, and a review of the research literature and archival data follows. The Puente Project cultural model is intended to produce successful academic outcomes, increased self-esteem, and greater self-confidence for Latino students through three program components: the writing component (a two-course sequence of accelerated writing instruction), the counseling component (which provides daily contact between the counselor and students), and the mentoring component (which fosters ongoing contacts between students and volunteers from the Latino professional and academic community). Evaluation results are highly positive program participants persisted at community colleges at a 97 percent rate and at least 48 percent of program participants transferred to four-year institutions. Examples of the program's replication and expansion into four-year institutions and high schools are offered. (Contains 31 references.) (DB)

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Celebratory Socialization:

Welcoming Latino Students to College

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Celebratory Socialization: Welcoming Latino Students to College

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Introduction

More than any other institutions of higher education, community colleges play a pivotal role in educating students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. In fact, as the largest single sector consisting of more than one third of all higher education institutions, community colleges educate approximately six million students annually (Cohen and Brawer, 1996) and nearly half of all students of color (Carter & Wilson, 1996). Moreover, community colleges continue to attract students of color at a higher rate than four-year institutions. For example, from 1988 to 1992, a 35.5 percent enrollment increase occurred in two-year colleges compared to 28.7 percent increase in four-year colleges (Carter and Wilson, 1994). With the trend of public colleges and universities to eliminate race and ethnicity as factors in their selective admissions process, the number of students of color selecting community colleges is expected to continue to rise (Carter & Wilson, 1996).

As Rendón and Garza (1996) remind us, Latinos and Native Americans, and to a large extent African Americans, tend to choose the path of the community colleges out of necessity if they want any college education at all. These students also often use the community colleges as the higher educational entry point to transfer to senior institutions if they want to pursue minimally a baccalaureate degree (Laden, 1994).

The general profile still typically offered of Latino and other racially/ethnically diverse students is that they are non-traditional compared to traditional college-going students of 18 to 24 years of age, especially in community colleges. That is, non-traditional students are typically first-generation college attendees, from low income socioeconomic backgrounds, academically underprepared, often work full- or part-time while in college, and may enroll part-time if working or have other responsibilities.

Persistence and completion rates tend to be low for this group, often attributed to the above factors that may act as constraints to academic success and persistence (Laden, 1994). But whether identified as traditional or non-traditional students, many of these students, regardless of their societal and economic realities, do indeed enroll in college and persist to graduation.

People are members of a variety of organizations and social settings and each has its own embedded culture. Newcomers of an organization are typically socialized to its particular norms, values, and behaviors by older members. In essence, Van Mannen (1978) avers that the socialization process that occurs shapes the person, that is, the new member. Van Mannen further describes this organizational socialization as a form of "people processing" in which people "learn the ropes" and acquire the social knowledge and skills necessary to their organizational position, status, or role (p. 19). Clearly, organizations have a stake in seeing that all their members fit into the routines and conform to the ideologies, values, and norms and cultural expectations. Hence, the social processes of the organization are used to convey to its members the expectations associated with their roles and behaviors (Trice and Beyer, 1993) when a person first join or experiences a change within the organization (e.g., promotion, demotion, relocation) (Van Mannen, 1978).

A more elaborated definition of organizational socialization states that it is a "theory about how new skills, belief systems, patterns of action and, occasionally, personal identities are acquired (or not acquired) by people as they move into new social settings" (Van Mannen, 1984, p. 211). Moreover, Van Maanen notes two contrasting forms of organizational socialization which newcomers to an organization may undergo. The more traditional organizational form expects newcomers to enter the particular social setting with the intent to conform their conduct to an image of what is organizationally desirable and proper, thus leading to a process which systematically reduces whatever diversity exists

among the newcomers at entry. Tierney (1997) views this form from a modernist perspective in which the socialization is a "process where people 'acquire' knowledge, [through] a one-way process in which the initiate learns how the organization works, and the socialization is a little more than a series of planned learning activities" (p. 5). In other words, newcomers are socialized to fit into a very specific homogeneous culture where the individuals are expected to sublimate or shed their own cultural attitudes and behaviors and learn to act in certain, already established cultural ways congruent with other members' attributes and behaviors in the organization.

On the other hand, the less traditional form of organizational socialization takes advantage of whatever attitudes and skills newcomers already possess, while members of the organization do what is possible to encourage the newcomers to exhibit and further refine such attributes. This form of socialization Van Maanen refers to as a "celebratory socialization" because it offers welcoming and confirming ceremonies that ease the transition of newcomers to the new setting and builds on preserving their heterogeneity. From the postmodernist perspective, Tierney (1997) states that culture is not "waiting 'out there' to be discovered and 'acquired' by new members ... [but rather] the organization's culture derives from the partial and mutually dependent knowledge of each person caught in the process and develops out of the work they do together" (p. 6). Thus, Tierney refers to this type of socialization as a 'give-and-take' process that allows newcomers to make sense of the organization by using their own unique cultural backgrounds and contexts. Individuals are not expected to put aside their own attributes and behaviors, but rather to blend their own with that of the current organizational culture to create an ever more distinctive culture that welcomes and celebrates the contributions of all participants.

How newcomers are welcomed and socialized into an organization is particularly important for racially and ethnically diverse college students. It is not uncommon for students of color to juggle two cultures in college -- their own distinctive culture and that of

the college, with the students' own cultures more typically being subordinated to the dominant culture of the organization. Becoming involved and persisting to graduation become problematic for those who feel particularly unwelcomed in the new environment. In fact, for most students of color, their most serious concern is not of getting into college but dealing with the problems they confront once they are matriculated. These problems span a range. They include the anxiety of breaking close family ties, loneliness and tensions inherent in finding their way around an alien culture, and coping with courses they are not necessarily well prepared for, given that many students of color come from poorer, less academically stringent high schools. Also, a such less visible but still very real problem is the one of dealing with the subtle and not-so-subtle discrimination built around the concept of being a minority student who is perceived to have received special treatment in college admissions while other more qualified (i.e., white) students were kept out (Fiske, 1988; Zwerling & London, 1993). All of these factors often lead to a severe case of culture shock for many of these students who are thrown on their own in a new organization with no one to offer a distinctive cultural welcoming into the unknown but seemingly homogenous world of the dominant group.

In this light, the concept of celebratory socialization (Van Maanen, 1984; Tierney, 1997) highlights a process that attempts to break down the confusion and alleviate culture shock by welcoming students and instilling a sense of belonging to the organization from the very beginning. Inherent in this process is the valuing of the students' culture and recognizing their distinctiveness while building on their socialization experiences and knowledge acquisition through culturally appropriate academic and student support programs. Rhoads and Valadez (1996) expand the concept of celebratory socialization to support the multiple forms of knowledge and ways of understanding diverse members bring with them to college. They further opine that celebratory socialization processes support a multicultural mission by embracing border knowledge -- "knowledge that resides

outside the canon, outside of the cultural mainstream" (p. 7), such as that border knowledge which students of color and their cultural contexts bring to the college setting and which often remain unacknowledged and/or invalidated.

Several organizational questions arise as a result of the increasing number of students of color who continue to choose the community colleges as a point of entry. This paper deals with several of these questions. How have the community colleges responded to students of color to foster higher retention rates and academic success for them? What socialization practices are enacted by the organization to promote the development and refinement of attitudes and abilities new members of color, particularly Latino students, bring to the community college?

In this paper, the example of the Puente Project, a California Community Colleges and University of California partnership for Latino transfer students, illustrates a positive organizational response to one group of students underrepresented in the aggregate in higher education.. I first present a discussion of the organizational response to students of color, then offer a discussion of organizational socialization practices. This is followed by the organizational background that led to the development of the Puente Project. Next, the success of the Puente Project is discussed and examples from the field are offered. An analysis of the program follows and implications for policy and practice are explored through the examination of the potential for transferring the model into other settings.

The data collection methods used include semi-structured interviews with administrators, faculty, and Puente Project staff at two community colleges, telephone interviews with Puente Project staff at the state level, and a review of the research literature, reports, newsletters, newspapers, and other archival data pertaining to the Puente Project and the Latino undergraduate experiences.

Organizational Responses to Students of Color

Issues of cultural diversity have impacted the community colleges since the 1960s when students of color began to enroll in record numbers in what were refereed to then as the open door colleges (Clark, 1960) or democracy's colleges (Brint & Karabel, 1989). Organizational responses have varied from systemic to individual institutional approaches for over 30 years in managing the welcoming and incorporating of students of color into the academic and social processes of the institution. Depending on the geographic locations of the community colleges, the demographics of students of color have varied and thus influenced the types and variety of programmatic offerings. Some of these offerings are offset by federal and state categorical funds. For example, among the federal and states programs, TRIO, EOPS, and Title III programs assist low income and ethnically diverse community college students who are the first in their families to attend college

Organizational changes have occurred in other ways, as well. Beginning in the mid 1980s, state reform movements to increase both the associate degree completion rates and transfer rates to four-year colleges and universities, especially for low income and underrepresented minority students, also led to a number of institutional and intersegmental changes. Among these changes were the development of transfer centers in the community colleges. The creation of transfer centers also led to an increased outreach role by four-year institutions into the community colleges and an improvement of course and program articulation agreements between these institutions to raise transfer rates. A number of new programs dedicated to assist students of color to persist and complete their academic goals to transfer and/or graduation also flourished (Laden, 1994). Among the most successful have been programs that take into account the students' socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds as part of who they are and the life experiences they bring with them to the academic environment.

Thus, according to some researchers (Van Maanen, 1984; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996; Tierney, 1997; Laden, forthcoming), Latinos and students of color in general bring

critical cultural knowledge and values with them to the community college that can be used by educators to influence these students' motivation and academic achievement by also acknowledging and further enhancing the cultural contexts which form part of their identifies. More specifically, students can learn the new organizational culture they now inhabit while simultaneously organizational actors, that is, college administrators and faculty, can facilitate and empower students' entry through celebratory activities which welcome and consider students' diverse experiences and multiple ways of knowledge and understanding.

In examining the Puente Project, I apply the concept of celebratory socialization to highlight how the cultural background of the students is embraced as the keystone of the program in the various higher education organizational components of the Puente Project. Moreover, I hold with the concept advocated by others (Tierney & Rhoads, 1991; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996) that the celebratory and dynamic process is a bi-directional socialization that occurs in the organizational culture and transforms both the newcomers and the long-term members of the organization by contact with each other. That is, as newcomers enter the organization, their dynamic interactions with other members lead to changes not only in the newcomers themselves but in other members of the organization , thus transforming the organization itself by their presence.

A Model Organizational Response to Specific Students of Color

Latinos are the youngest and fastest growing population group in the United States, constituting one in every 11 persons living in the U.S. (De los Santos & Rigual, 1994). More specifically, Latinos make up nearly 26 percent of the total population of persons living in the state of California, or represent one in every four persons (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993). Furthermore, of all Latinos enrolled in California higher education institutions, nearly 57 percent attend community colleges making them the largest single ethnic population in this system (Carter & Wilson, 1994). Of particular concern for

California policy makers and educators are the low transfer rates and enrollment of Latinos in the California public four-year colleges and universities. To address these imbalances, a number of organizational programmatic efforts to overcome barriers and build bridges between the two- and four-year systems leading to greater academic success rates for Latinos have been undertaken. Among those of highly notable success is the Puente Project, targeting Latino students in their first year of community college. Operating out of the University of California President's Office, the Puente Project works with 38 institutions, slightly more than one third of the 106 community colleges in the state.

The Puente Project was initially conceived in 1981 as an internal organizational response to address the perceived needs of Latino community college students at Chabot College located in the San Francisco bay area. Concerned about the high drop out rate for Latinos at Chabot College, Patricia McGrath, an English faculty member, and Felix Galaviz, a counselor and assistant dean, undertook a thorough examination of over 2,000 transcripts of Latino students and discovered that these students were not following a logical sequence of courses leading to specific majors, often ignored prerequisites, took very few general education courses necessary to meet either associate degree or transfer requirements, and had little to no contact with academic counselors. Moreover, a consistent pattern of enrollment in English courses revealed that Latino students were disproportionately enrolled in remedial writing courses, and they were not moving into advanced English classes which provide opportunities to further develop reading and writing skills necessary for transfer. The review of transcripts also strongly suggested that in all likelihood most of these students were first-generation college students (McGrath & Galaviz, 1996a), thus probably had no family members to provide any academic guidance.

With these data in mind, McGrath and Galaviz designed a program of linkages to help Latinos persist in college and succeed academically, transfer to senior institutions to earn their bachelor's and advanced degrees, and return to their communities as leaders and

mentors. McGrath and Galaviz named the program the Puente Project, using the Spanish word *puente*, that is, bridge, as its symbolic keystone for conveying the concept of building bridges institutionally, inter-institutionally with four-year colleges, and with the greater community. Of special emphasis in the Puente Project are the threefold goals which include (1) two semesters of intensive English instruction focusing on writing and reading about the students' Latino cultural experiences and identity; (2) Latino counselors who have first-hand knowledge of the challenges the students face; and (3) mentors from the Latino professional and academic community (McGrath & Galaviz, 1996b).

Moreover, from the very beginning the role of the Latino community, offering both external and internal organizational underpinnings, was seen by McGrath and Galaviz as crucial, and having the greatest stake in the success or failure of the education of all its Latino youths. McGrath and Galaviz (1996a) reasoned that greater involvement by all segments of the Latino community leads to higher institutional accountability and responsiveness, and ultimately to a more effective educational environment. With these various goals in mind, they launched the Puente Project as a practical, cost effective model for Latino students that addressed their unique needs by not only being sensitive to but also affirming their ethnic identity by building on their cultural strengths (McGrath and Galaviz, 1996b) -- much along the lines of the celebratory socialization advocated by some researchers (Van Maanen, 1984; Rhoads and Valadez, 1996; Tierney, 1997; Laden, forthcoming). In effect, the students' border knowledge was validated and incorporated into the curriculum rather than ignored or dismissed.

Puentistas Connect an Academic Program with a Cultural Context

The term 'Puentistas' quickly emerged in the lexicon of the Puente Project world. The Spanish word *puentista* can be broadly interpreted to mean a person who is crossing a bridge, a person who builds bridges, or a person who works on bridges in some capacity. However defined, the term is very fitting for identifying those individuals who are

connected with the Puente Project, whatever their roles might be, for central to the concept of the Puente Project is the connection between the cultural context of the students and the academic environment of the Puente program and the larger organization as a whole. Thus, at least one of the two Puente faculty team must be a Latino. Moreover, the faculty begin their own bridge crossing by participating in an intensive summer training course held at UC Berkeley each summer for new Puente faculty. Among the activities, the faculty do the same curricular exercises the Puentistas will do during the academic year.

Specifically, the Puente Project cultural model offers a tri-bridge approach that leads to successful academic outcomes, increased self-esteem, and greater self-confidence for Latino students. The fundamental bridges that welcome Puentistas into the program and help them move toward academic success in college are the writing component, the counseling component, and the mentoring component. These three components were carefully planned and piloted by McGrath and Galaviz. To find the optimal method of instruction, the two faculty members selected a pilot cohort of 25 full-time students (UC Office of the President, 1992) with results that far exceeded McGrath's and Galaviz's expectations. The overall students' grade point average rose from 1.64 prior to Puente to 2.70 after two semesters in the program despite the fact that these students were enrolled in three times as many academic courses as they had been prior to becoming part of the Puente Project. Moreover, a 100 percent persistence rate was achieved with the return of all the students the following academic year (McGrath & Galaviz, 1996b). Of the pilot Puentista cohort, 33 percent transferred to a senior institution compared to the fewer than 5 percent of all Latino community college students transferring at that time (UC Office of the President, 1992).

The writing component of the project is based on a two-course sequence of accelerated writing instruction. A cohort of approximately 30 students begins in the fall semester, called phase one, with a pre-transfer developmental English course. Puentistas

begin by reading Latino literature and writing compositions based on their own cultural and community experiences. The rationale is that students are able to write about what they know best, that is, drawing from their own Latino life experiences, their families and friends, their neighborhoods, and all that is most intimately familiar to them. In the second semester, phase two, the cohort enrolls in a transfer-level English 1A composition class with the same Puente faculty. Latino literature and personal cultural experiences continue to be integrated into the curriculum. Oral and written mentor activities in the classroom are incorporated during this semester. Additionally, guest Latino writers and artists share their work and experiences with Puentistas, stressing the ways they are able to remain true to their own cultural identities while functioning successfully in the mainstream society.

The academic counseling component strives to provide daily close contact between the counselor and the students, thus placing the counselor in as positive and proactive a position as possible. In both semesters, the counselor takes an active role in the courses, offering practical academic advice as well as assistance in the course work. The counselor offers not only typical academic and career guidance and advice about degree requirements, transfer eligibility, financial aid information and assistance, and the college application process, but provides the necessary day-to-day understanding, encouragement., motivation, and psychological support to persist and succeed in what for many is still an alien environment.

As most community college counselors do, the Puente counselor undertakes the recruitment and outreach efforts into the community for the program. The counselor selects students for the program through early recruitment in the high schools and also solicits the mentors, matching them with students according to their personalities and career interests and monitoring the relationships throughout the year. Working closely with parents also is critical to the success of the program by helping them to understand and become involved

with their children's pursuit of higher education, hence a variety of activities are held in the evenings or weekends that include Puentistas' parents.

These activities alone are demanding of both time and commitment by the counselor coupled with developing and maintaining an element of trust and acceptance in the local Latino community. A counselor with a long history of working with the Latino community in northern California in speaking with me about recruiting prospective Latino students and the degree of involvement required noted:

> You have to go after them, attend their events, and establish personal relationships with them. They have to know you have been referred and that you can be trusted. It's [all] very culturally identified [with them].

The mentoring component relies on volunteers from the Latino professional and academic community who receive training and commit to spend at least 16 hours per year with their mentees. The mentors invite the students to their work sites, take them to professional meetings, come to class for specific activities, and interact with them on a personal basis as well, thus generally sharing their professional and personal lives with their mentees. Again, central to the mentoring relationship is the notion that as successful Latino professionals, the mentors are able to retain their cultural identity while achieving their academic and career goals (McGrath & Galaviz, 1996b). Hence, the explicit role modeling for Puentistas is that they too can do the same within their own bi-directional organizational socialization process by incorporating the best from both worlds without losing their own cultural values and sense of identity. Former Puente students also return to serve as mentors in the time honored tradition of "giving back to the community" that students of color acknowledge as part of their obligation to share what they have gained with others in the Latino community.

The academic and counseling components work well together from every respect according to those involved with the Puente Project at the institutional level. A faculty member who was part of the first Puente team at his community college credited the

leadership at the college from the governing board to the president to the faculty for its commitment to building a successful Puente program. He told me:

> We have *carte blanche* to do what we need to do to get Latinos in college, to keep them in, and to help them be academically successful. The president and the dean have been very generous with resources, so if we do not succeed it not because of lack of commitment or allocation of resources.

Teams change often because of the heavy demands of the program and because others are often waiting in the wings to also serve as Puente faculty. Faculty not only deal with the typical classroom and counseling needs as with all their other students, but with Puente students much more is required of the Puente faculty. Making and receiving phone calls both on campus and at home are not uncommon as are dealing with family, work, and financial issues. Evenings and weekends are not entirely free either as Puente faculty participate in conferences and workshops, attend Latino community events, meet with mentors, do outreach into local high schools with large populations of Latino students, meet with parents, and attend students' family events. A counselor commented about these demands to me:

> I can be here all night if I want to, working on Puente needs doing *esté y el otro*. There is so much to do and these students need so much. But I do it because it is a very rewarding job. I get back much more than I give . . . and I know that the students will give back to the Latino community someday, too. Some are doing it already.

Faculty also meet locally during the year and in a statewide conference to learn new methods and to share their experiences. At the most recent conference, a faculty member at a college with a new Puente program shared her anxiety and comfort in meeting with colleagues during the three-day gathering. She declared:

> What I most needed and received from the weekend were the discussions in small groups during the sessions and the brief meetings with just one or two people in the hallways during the breaks. How comforting it was to find that other teams were facing the same situations that had so troubled us, and some of them had even figured out solutions! It was good for me to find that others faced the transitional difficulties between phase one and two classes . . . [and] Teresa and I gained some new strategies to use with our mentors (Jordan, 1997).

The empirical data continue to reveal impressive results of the Puente Project. While each of the 38 community colleges enrolls approximately 30 students a year, thus serving approximately 1,200 new students annually; another 1,800 continuing students are served annually with an astounding 97 percent retention rate and a 95 percent involvement of the Puentista parents in Puente activities as well (UC President's Office, 1996). At least 48 percent of all students who complete the Puente program transfer to a four-year institution. Of note are the 30 percent of Puente transfer students who enroll in one of the 9 UC campuses compared to 22 percent of all community college transfer students to UC. According to the California Master Plan, the UC system accepts only the top 12 percent of all applicants. Another 56 percent Puente transfer students enroll in one of the 22 California State Universities (Stough, 1996), which accept the top 33 percent of all applicants. Although empirical data are still being gathered and analyzed, preliminary evidence also suggests that an increasing number of Puente students are going on to graduate school after receiving their baccalaureate degrees (Rouleau, 1997). In sum, what appears clear from the data are the overall results: the Puente Project successfully retains Latinos in college, assists them to excel academically, and transfers a much higher number to four-year institutions than any other program for targeted groups (García, 1997).

Building Bridges with New Partners

In 1985, four years after its founding, the success of the Puente Project led to a partnership between the California Community Colleges and the University of California. The UC Office of the President provides administrative and fiscal oversight and office space for the Puente Project staff while the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office coordinates efforts among the 106 community colleges interested in participating in the partnership (University of California, 1993). McGrath and Galaviz continue their affiliation with the Puente Project by serving as its co-directors.

During the 16 years of its existence, the Puente Project has added other new partners and new events, some which have grown in magnitude from just one event into multiple events during the academic year. For example, the celebratory socialization of Puente students is exemplified as well by the real bridges the students cross each fall and spring onto a UC campus during the Puente transfer day events. Akin to the traditional College Day and/or Transfer Day held in high schools and colleges each fall, the Puente Transfer and Motivational Conferences are held at different UC campuses in the south and in the north each fall and spring. Current and former Puentistas, friends, family, mentors, Latino artists and writers attend what has become standing-room-only events to hear motivational Latino speakers, attend workshops on majors and careers, the transfer admissions process, financial aid, housing, and extra-curricular activities. Sessions are also held on such topics as family and work issues, non traditional careers, voter registration, and sharing recent writings with other students or performing skits. The activities are particularly unique in that the presenters and many of the representatives are Latino themselves, thus the cultural identity of the students are continually reaffirmed by the UC individuals present from the different campuses, including chancellors, administrators, and faculty. A student who attended the 1996 fall conference held at UC San Diego commented, "[t]he entire experience has made me feel important . . . I really feel that I can do this [transfer]", while another student at the UC San Francisco fall conference stated, "I walked away thinking [that] there's nothing I could not achieve" (cited in Rouleau, 1996).

Another bridge partnership with the Puente Project has occurred on a UC campus. Making and keeping the Puente connection in the four-year institutions remain important to the transfer students. Thus, in 1995 at UC Irvine, Puente transfer students created the first formal program at a university. These students hold weekly meetings and plan a number of events throughout the year to continue to enjoy the support of each other while taking

advantage of the new resources available to them. UCI Puentistas have created their own mentor connection with community college students intending to transfer to the campus, established a pen pal outreach program with their two-year counterparts, and host open houses and workshops to welcome the new Puentistas to UCI each fall.

A more elaborate bridge partnership occurred in 1993 between the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Puente Project. Funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and funds from 10 interested high school districts led to the replication of the Puente Project in 18 high schools in California for an initial four-year period. The high school program puts Latino students on a four-year college preparatory track. Not only do the students enroll in academically challenging classes, but they also receive close academic counseling and mentoring to help them negotiate the process successfully (Leuer, 1997). Although the high school program is in its fourth year of funding, the Carnegie Corporation has extended its support through 1999. In keeping with its commitment to the corporation, the high school Puente Project is being evaluated by an independent evaluator on an annual basis (Gándara, 1997).

Discussion

In using the framework of organizational socialization as advocated by Van Maanen (1984) and Tierney (1997) to examine the Puente Project as an exemplar, the evidence strongly suggests that the Puente Project provides a vivid model for how an educational organization can incorporate and share the cultural mosaic of the U.S. society in new, interesting, and successful ways. By inviting Latino students into the community college -- and now into high schools --the Puente Project provides a web of connections and caring communities as suggested by Gilligan (1982) and Mittelstet (1994) that not only incorporate but celebrate the cultural identities of its diverse populations. The organizational structure of the Puente Project has enabled partnerships to develop among community colleges, universities, and high schools in California with the focused intent to

welcome Latino students through tri-part celebratory socializing processes that offer pedagogical and transformative experiences that reach beyond the students themselves. The Puente Project helps students raise their educational and career aspirations, achieve their academic goals, increase both their self-esteem and their self-confidence, and do it with a sense of personal and cultural pride in remaining true to who they are while exploring and developing in new directions within the world of higher education.

But the organizations involved also have changed as a result of interactions with individuals who are part of the Puente Project. The team teaching approach favored by the Puente program and its rotational process that allows other faculty to become part of the program has a larger effect upon the community college organization. First, it allows the faculty who leave the Puente Project to take their new expertise into their other classes, thus transforming their teaching in other courses and with other students. Second, non Puente faculty have the opportunity to see the intended and unintended positive outcomes of the program on Latino students and this may act as a recruitment technique in itself for attracting other faculty to become part of the program Third, administrators are more amenable to supporting the program financially due to such positive outcomes as Latino students having higher retention rates, taking more courses, earning a higher grade point average, and having higher transfer rates as a group. Fourth, the inclusion of the greater Latino community through involvement of mentors, parents, and guest Latino speakers strongly supports the cultural celebratory underpinnings of the organizational socialization of not just the students but of all members of the community college itself who participate in Puente Project events and activities on or off campus. Fifth, the extended role of the UC campuses to host the Puente Project fall and spring motivational and transfer conferences as well as their greater activity directly in the community colleges signify a larger commitment and allocation of resources to the community colleges as a whole and to the Latino students in particular. Lastly, each affected organization is transformed by virtue of the fact that the

Puente Project has created a larger academic partnership between the community colleges and senior institutions such as the UC President's Office, the University of California campuses, and other state universities. Hence, these institutional linkages foster a larger community of those involved in the education of Latino students. It also is likely that there is a beneficial 'rub off' effect for other students of color in these organizations as a result of the social networks created.

Clearly, the Puente Project is a model program for increasing the retention and academic success of Latino students and offers a template for how other student groups could also benefit. Several questions can be posed about the program, nonetheless. How might the Puente Project be modified to broaden the concept of celebratory socialization to more students? How does a program such as this which serves a target population meet the changing criteria related to affirmative action concerns?

In terms of changes to the model, it appears that at least several aspects can and have been modified by some community colleges already. One feature is the inclusion of more courses in addition to English. For example, a community college in northern California offers a program modeled on the Puente Project that incorporates mathematics courses along with English. The reasoning being that Latino students, and most students of color in general, are not as proficient in either math or English and need additional attention in both subjects. Another college in southern a California added a range of ten general education courses as well as a summer bridge program with a basic reading, writing, and mathematics review courses to help the students get a head start in starting college. The rationale for the additional courses is that if students are to have any substantive success toward transfer and/or earning their associate of arts degree, then general education courses which form the heart of transfer and degree requirements must be considered seriously as part of the Latino students' educational plans. Including a wider array of courses has the added advantage of involving more college personnel in the

reciprocal process of organizational socialization, thus moving the organization as a whole toward greater understanding of the individual members within it. Moreover, counselors at this college also offer a college orientation course each semester specifically for Latinos in the program.

A third feature is the inclusion of tutoring on a large scale for students in these programs. If these students are to succeed academically, every effort is made to ensure that will occur through the use of academic instructional services. Both the tutoring services of the college and additional tutoring specifically for students in these special programs are offered. In some cases, peer tutors are used while in other colleges community volunteers and mentors also contribute their time to tutor the Latino students.

A fourth feature is to consider opening up of the program to students each semester rather than having them waiting until the fall of each academic year to bring in a new cohort. Greater college resources, however, are required to incorporate a new cohort each semester than just once a year as certain introductory courses must be offered each term. Of course, from a financial and administrative standpoint, a critical mass of students must be enrolled each term in order to meet the minimum full-time equivalency and weekly student contact hours.

A fifth feature is the possibility of offering a similar program to students of other underrepresented groups, such as African Americans and Native Americans. It is evident from the research literature that other students of color can profit from the specialized attention that programs such as the Puente Project with its focus on affirming and building on the students' culture can offer. Hence, several colleges have modified versions of the program and offer a parallel program for African American students. Of special importance to these programs are the cultural and the mentoring components that welcome the students and help them to become members of the collegiate organizational setting. For example, several community colleges in northern California offer a nearly identical program for

African American students. One college uses a variety of mentors from both on and off campus while the other prefers to use African American professional from the community. In these institutions, retention, degree completion, and transfer rates for these students have increased.

Another significant consideration of a program such as the Puente Project or any of its counterparts is the issue of affirmative action. Given the recent opposition to affirmative action in California, Texas and elsewhere, particularly as related to college admissions on the basis of race and ethnicity, how policy makers and practitioners continue to address the educational needs for Latinos and other students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds is of concern. Recent California decisions, such as the voter initiative Proposition 209, the Regents of the University of California's 1995 vote to elimination affirmative action considerations in UC admissions, and a more recent affirmative action lawsuit involving San Bernadino College, have placed programs such as the Puente Project in the limelight. According to the Puente Project public information officer Joan Rouleau (1997), "The program is in full compliance with the law in that the focus of the program is now on curricular content rather than on targeted individuals whereas before the focus was on both the curriculum and Latinos as the target population". Hence, offering a program with a curriculum based on Latino literature and drawing on the cultural experiences of students does not violate any of the current state affirmative action policies, especially if it is open to <u>all</u> students as the Puente Project is now.

As with the Puente Project, other programs such as the example given above, state in their literature that their programs are open to students of any racial or ethnic background wishing to join. Nevertheless, at least part of the course curriculum and the selection of mentors still tend to be oriented toward the needs of Latino students. While the Puente Project as well as all its various offerings in community colleges are open to anyone, they still tend to attract primarily Latinos in light of the array of specific courses designed

specifically for them. The issue still remains, however, that matriculated non Latino students not familiar with Spanish can challenge the use of curricular content written in this language unless translations or bilingual versions are offered. Nonetheless, regardless of the particular format of a specific program, the Puente Project as well as variations that have arisen all tend to honor the concept of celebratory socialization by welcoming and affirming the cultural backgrounds students bring with them into the organization while introducing them to the social processes of the organization the students have entered.

Conclusions

Policy makers and practitioners have a model in the Puente Project that lends itself to modification for other student groups and for greater inclusion of other courses than just English. The ability to involve the greater community, namely the parents of the students and successful Latino professionals as mentors and role models are but two of the benefits of this program that should be attractive to educational decision makers. Furthermore, rather than treating programs such as the Puente Project as discrete entities within one institution or one system, they offer the opportunity to create and maintain an extended, integrated educational pipeline among the state and/or local community colleges, the high schools and the four-year colleges and universities to facilitate the retention and academic success of Latinos and other ethnic students who are underrepresented in higher education.

Moreover, the concept of celebratory socialization highlights how educational institutions and those within can create bridges to reach out to their all students, to the larger community, and to the expanded K-graduate educational pipeline to reach a greater number of racially and ethnically diverse individuals within it and help them move further along the educational pipeline. The organizational practices that embrace and validate the cultural differences of students have the effect of also shaping the organization itself and thus reshaping the organizational culture. The bi-directional view of socialization and cultural change are best exemplified by programs such as the Puente Project and the bridges

that emanate from it within and between organizational groups and their members. It provides a model that can be emulated in all of education, from kindergarten through graduate school and it is not restricted to one cultural group or one population. The concept of celebratory socialization can be embedded in any organization that is open to new challenges and changes.

In sum, as several UC eligibility task force multi-year reports on Latino and African Americans have found, "Enduring social change can only come about through a comprehensive multi-tiered, collaborative effort among and across relevant community and academic institutions" (Vásquez, 1996). That is, it is not enough to direct efforts at any one point of the educational system, rather the linkages involving the public school system, the community colleges, the universities, the local community, and the business sector must be direct partners and active participants if educational and societal changes of policy and practice are to occur.

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